

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 SSM-03 SAA-01
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
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/120 W

-----033729 231456Z /41

R 231415Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5684
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USCINCEUR

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, LY
SUBJECT: RIVAL PALESTINIAN GROUPS CLASH IN TRIPOLI; LIBYA
AMALGAMATES COMMANDO OFFICES

REF: TRIPOLI 0556 (NOTAL)

1. LIBYA HAS ORDERED THE AMALGAMATION OF "ALL PALESTINIAN
GROUPS" REPRESENTED IN LIBYA INTO ONE OFFICE UNDER THE NAME
PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION. DECISION FOLLOWS AN
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ARMED CLASH BETWEEN RIVAL PALESTINIAN FACTIONS IN DOWNTOWN
TRIPOLI EVENING OF JULY 19 IN WHICH TWO OR THREE PERSONS
REPORTEDLY WERE KILLED.

2. THIS UNEXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT WAS CONTAINED IN A COMMUNIQUE
ISSUED BY THE ARAB LIAISON BUREAU WHICH HANDLES LIBYA'S RE-
LATIONS WITH ALL ARAB OR ISLAMIC POPULAR OR LIBERATION MOVEMENTS,

INCLUDING PALESTINIAN GROUPS. COMMUNIQUE REFERRED OBLIQUELY TO THE JULY 19TH CLASH BY NOTING THAT "PALESTINIAN RIFLES SHALL BE AIMED ONLY IN THE DIRECTION OF THE JOINT ENEMY" AND ADDING THAT AN AMALGAMATION OF PALESTINIAN OFFICES WAS NECESSARY QUOTE ESPECIALLY SINCE THE OFFICES OF THE PLO HAVE BEGUN TO ELIMINATE EACH OTHER UNQUOTE. (AS NOTED REFTEL, PALESTINIANS HAVE LARGE REPRESENTATION IN TRIPOLI IN ADDITION TO THE ARMED GROUPS REGULARLY TRAINED IN LIBYA. BESIDES THE PLO ITSELF, FOUR COMMANDO GROUPS -- AL-FATAH, PFLP, PDFLP AND PFLP-GC -- HAVE OFFICES HERE.)

3. DETAILS ON THE JULY 19 EPISODE ARE SCANTY WITH ONE WIDELY-CIRCULATED REPORT PORTRAYING THE FIGHTING AS BETWEEN AL-FATAH AND PFLP PARTISANS. ANOTHER VERSION OF THE INCIDENT SAYS THE SHOOTING WAS BETWEEN AL-FATAH COMMANDOS AND SUPPORTERS OF A SPLINTER GROUP WITHIN THE COMMANDO ORGANIZATION. A JULY 22 AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE REPORT QUOTING THE CAIRO WEEKLY "AKHBAR AL-YAWM" STATES ONLY THAT THE FATAH OFFICE IN TRIPOLI WAS ATTACKED BY COMMANDOS ARMED WITH SUB-MACHINE GUNS. PAPER SAID TWO FATAH PARTISANS WERE KILLED AND A THIRD INJURED WITH FIVE PALESTINIANS SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED.

4. COMMENT. LIBYAN GOVERNMENT IS HIGHLY EMBARRASSED AND CONCERNED BY THIS EPISODE, THE FIRST OF ITS KIND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HERE. STREET VIOLENCE IS RARE IN LIBYA AND THE PALESTINIAN COMMANDO GROUPS WERE PRESUMED TO BE ON A VERY TIGHT LEASH. THE ARAB LIAISON BUREAU'S STATEMENT ON THE AMALGAMATION OF PALESTINIAN OFFICES WILL PROBABLY HAVE LITTLE IMPACT ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE GROUPS REPRESENTED IN TRIPOLI -- THEY WILL HAVE A NEW PUBLIC NAME BUT OTHERWISE OPERATE MUCH AS BEFORE WITH THE SAME INTERNAL RIVALRIES. PRESUMABLY THE LIBYAN AUTHORITIES WILL NOW ATTEMPT TO MONITOR PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES MORE CLOSELY, BUT MOST OBSERVERS HERE AGREE THIS WILL BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE TASK AND GIVES NO ASSURANCE THAT THE INTERNECINE DISPUTES BETWEEN PALESTINIAN FACTIONS MIGHT NOT ONE DAY SPILL OVER INTO AN INCIDENT INVOLVING A FOREIGN EMBASSY. CARLE

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